

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3849

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 10274

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IZ, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH RELATIONS WITH IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 446 AND 461

SUMMARY: BRITISH SAY THEY HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO IRAQI REQUEST FOR UPGRADING OF RESPECTIVE INTEREST SECTIONS AND HOPE TO GET SOME ADDITIONAL FREEDOM OF ACTION FOR THEIR SECTION IN BAGHDAD AS PART OF THE DEAL. EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS ARE BOOMING, AND BRITISH CONTINUE TO WORK QUIETLY ON RESUMPTION FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITHOUT TRYING TO MEET "IMPOSSIBLE" IRAQI CONDITION OF REVERSAL HMG POSITION ON GULF ISLANDS ISSUE. END SUMMARY

1. WE ARE PUZZLED BY REPORT IN SECOND REFTEL. ACTING HEAD FCO ME DEPT HUNT TOLD US SEPTEMBER 6 THAT BRITISH HAVE NOT YET RESPONDED TO SYRIAN REQUEST TO UPGRADE LONDON REPRESENTATION. AS HE RECONSTRUCTED EVENTS, SYRIANS FIRST INFORMED BRITISH THEY WERE RAISING LEVEL TO FIRST SECRETARY. BRITISH REPLIED THIS A RECIPROCAL
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MATTER, NOT RPT NOT UNILATERAL. IRAQIS THEN CAME

BACK WITH REQUEST FOR RECIPROCAL UPGRADING. BRITISH ARE CONSIDERING. (WE DID NOT CONFRONT HUNT WITH CONTRARY REPORT FROM BAGHDAD, BUT IT MAY BE WORTH PURSUING TO SEE WHICH INFORMANT GIVING US INCORRECT INFO.)

2. HUNT CONFIDED THAT AS FIRST STEP FCO HAS ASKED ISTANBUL TO CHECK ON SYRIAN NOMINEE, WHO IS CURRENTLY SYRIAN CONSUL GENERAL THERE. CHECK HAS ITS SECURITY ASPECTS, BUT BRITISH ALSO SUSPECT CONGEN IN ISTANBUL PROBABLY OF COUNSELOR RATHER THAN FIRST SECRETARY RANK. IF LATTER TRUE, BRITISH WOULD TELL SYRIANS THEY MUST UPGRADE RECIPROCALLY TO COUNSELOR LEVEL.

3. BRITISH ALSO INTERESTED IN EXTENDING PERMITTED ACTIVITIES OF RESPECTIVE INTEREST SECTIONS AS PART OF DEAL. THEY HOPE TO WIN RIGHT OF POLITICAL REPORTING, NOTING THAT FORMAL HANDICAP UNDER WHICH THEIR INTERESTS SECTION LABORS DUE TO SWEDISH SENSITIVITIES IN BAGHDAD IS PROBABLY NO HANDICAP TO FREEWHEELING IRAQI INTERESTS SECTION IN LONDON. OTHERWISE, HUNT TOLD US, THERE IS LITTLE POINT IN AGREEING TO UPGRADING--SINCE IT ONLY HELPS MAKE STATUS QUO MORE COMFORTABLE, PUTTING OFF DAY OF FULL RESUMPTION DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

4. RCC MEMBER GHADAN DID INDEED RECEIVE EXCELLENT MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR WOUNDED ARM AND EXPRESSED PROFUSE GRATITUDE TO FCO OFFICIALS WHO VISITED HIM. IN ALL CONVERSATIONS HE STUCK BY LINE THAT RESUMPTION DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED UNTIL BRITISH "RIGHTED THE WRONG" OF THE GULF ISLANDS ISSUE. LAST TIME HE SAID THIS, JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE, HOWEVER, GHADAN HAD TWINKLE IN HIS EYE, ACCORDING TO HUNT, AND SPOKE SOOTHINGLY OF POSSIBLE PROGRESS BY THE TIME HE RETURNED TO BRITAIN SOME TWO MONTHS HENCE.

5. HUNT THOUGHT THERE ARE SOMETHING LIKE 4,000 IRAQIS BEING EDUCATED IN BRITAIN AT PRESENT AND CONFIRMED RECENT INCREASE IN MILITARY OFFICER TRAINING.

6. BUSINESS IS GOOD. IRAQIS TELL BRITISH THEY ENJOY LARGEST SHARE OF IRAQI IMPORT MARKET, THOUGH FRENCH HAVE JUST PUBLISHED TRADE STATISTICS WHICH WOULD PUT FRENCH IN FIRST PLACE (SOME 29 MILLION POUNDS OF EXPORT SALES LAST YEAR AGAINST 26 MILLION FOR UK). BRITISH ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING POSSIBLE TRADE FAIR IN BAGHDAD.

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7. WE INFORMED HUNT OF STATE US RELATIONS WITH IRAQ PER STATE 167159, FOR WHICH HE (AND WE) GRATEFUL.

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